

Dear FPC family and friends,

A few world events have taken place that have a direct impact upon the life of the individual follower of Jesus in Strasburg. I have mentioned a few times in the past my favorite theologian, Karl Barth, who at the height of WWI was asked about how he managed the reality of the war and his Sunday preaching. He once preached on Mark 13:7 where Jesus tells his disciples “when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed.” His point was that during these significant events within the world, the church, and by extension the individual follower of Jesus, must not be tempted to align the kingdom of God with any political kingdom or party on this earth.

He goes further and stated in another sermon during Hitler’s rise in 1933, that the church must continue its core mission which is to preach the Word of God, rather than reacting in panic or adapting to the political atmosphere. He said that he would preach as if nothing happened, as if there were no war, instead of inundating his sermons with talk about the war, he would preach that God rules over, and judges, all politics and human conflict. He repeatedly called war sinful and wrong and insisted that his congregation not veer from gazing into the heavenly, even while living within the earthly.

We are at war and it is sinful, and it is wrong, but it cannot become the primary emphasis day in and day out as people do not know Jesus. Our primary mission is to bring people to Jesus and to encourage them in their walk as they become more and more mature in their journey. I hope this is where we find ourselves, as followers of the prince of peace. We have to be unequivocally opposed to war, unequivocally in support of righteousness (acting according to the will of God), and never lend our voice to the discord within which we live.

In the past branches of the church have come up with policies that have attempted to justify war. One can think of the Just War Theory that the Roman Catholic Church put forward and codified during the second Vatican Council during the Vietnam War. Today other churches, both individual and denominational, have aligned themselves either formally or just in word, with war as it happens around us. From our perspective as citizens of the United States as we are witnessing a series of wars in which we are involved, it seems as if the words of Mark 13 are weighing heavily upon us.

But the idea of a war that in any way can be considered “just” is outside of the parameter of righteousness, and so must be outside of the desires and wishes of our God. That is what makes it sinful, wrong, and evil. We must, however, make a real distinction between those who rule during the wars and so have the full responsibility of this sin, and those who are fighting the war, the soldiers, and the responsibility which they hold. While I would challenge the Christian legitimacy of any war, I would support with all my breath, and with all the life that I have within me, the soldiers and their families. It is a distinction that the church has to make as well. Our responsibility is to be in relationship and to support and care for individuals and their families. This is especially true of soldiers who have been placed in situations that most of us cannot imagine with impacts that are lifelong. We have a duty given to us by Christ to support the soldier.

This is the greyness in which we are called to live. We are to worship God who is sovereign over all things, especially the world in which we live. We are to call out sin when we experience it and especially when it has the danger of conflagration, and we are to focus on our primary calling

which is to preach the Gospel. I believe that we have been able to do this as a church as we live out our lives together. Stay focused on Christ even while it seems like the world around you is falling apart. It's not, Christ is still in charge and in control.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

NO COFFEE HOUR FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH

Bridge of Hope Welcoming Committee - We are partnering with Bridge of Hope to bring a family into the church's home at 119 South Decatur Street. We are looking for a handful of people who might be willing to be a welcoming committee for the family as they move in. They would be willing to periodically get together and have a meal with them, be a neighbor to them, and be the face of FPC to the family as they journey through a difficult time in their life. There are no responsibilities that extend beyond a welcome and a neighborly presence. Let Pastor Bob know if you might be interested in taking part in this ministry.

Important update to the construction in Fellowship Hall: As a result of the construction and the widening scope of the project, we do not have access to the kitchen and so we are going to call off coffee hour as a result. Stay patient with the project. This too shall pass. Again, thanks to Steve Szczeniak and the Trustees as a whole as they stay with the project and are working to ensure that all the campus is ready and prepared for kingdom work.

Our youth are on a mission!: On Sunday March 29 the youth are providing a meal for anyone who might want one. You are able to sign up for a meal here: <https://ignitedstudentministry.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/3502587>

Lenten and Holy Week Services: Join us for weekly services here at

First Presbyterian Church offered by the Strasburg Ministerium.

12 pm Wednesday Lenten Service Schedule with lunch

March 11 ACTS Covenant Fellowship

March 18 First Presbyterian

March 25 Lampeter UMC

Save the date for the Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 4th!: To prepare, we will be Stuffing Eggs on Saturday, March 28th, starting at 9am in Fellowship Hall. Please look for sign ups under the TV by the welcome area. We will need lots of hands to help! There are also sign-up sheets for items needed to fill the eggs. Donations will need to be back by Friday, March 27th. All items should be individually wrapped and NUT FREE!